



Bitterroot, Flathead and Lolo National Forests

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Media Release

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Proposed Forest Plans Released

The Bitterroot, Flathead and Lolo National Forests have released their respective Proposed Forest Land Management Plans. Each plan proposes general guidance for on-the-ground projects and activities on each forest. Public comment is encouraged and requested by the end of July. Several public meetings and open houses are scheduled on each forest to share information about the proposed plans.

The three forests have been working together as the Western Montana Planning Zone since 2003. The forests share key issues, resources, customers and interested public. The existing Flathead and Lolo Forest Plans were approved in 1986 and the Bitterroot Forest Plan was approved in 1987.

Bitterroot Forest Supervisor Dave Bull said, "Law requires that forest plans be revised about every 15 years." According to Bull, the revisions are timely, and it's an opportunity to address new and different information.

The process for forest plan revision changed with new federal planning regulations in 2005. Flathead National Forest Supervisor Cathy Barbouletos said, "With the new regulations, the new plans will be shorter and less prescriptive than the existing plans." The plans will focus on strategic direction for the future. No on-the-ground project-level decisions will be determined through these forest plans.

In 2004 a proposed action was released for each forest. Public comments were received, helping the agency draft a preferred option which was released last year. Numerous public meetings and community-based working groups, as well as input from Forest Service employees, led to the development of the proposed plan that is now available for public comment.

Lolo National Forest Supervisor Debbie Austin said, "We had an outstanding public response to our collaborative efforts which included diverse interests working together to find common ground. We look forward to the public continuing in this dialogue and providing quality feedback."

The public is encouraged to comment on the proposed plan by the end of July, which concludes the 90-day comment period. Several open houses will be hosted across the three forests. They include:

Bitterroot National Forest

May 8, 18 and 31	Bitterroot River Inn	Hamilton, MT	4-8pm
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Flathead National Forest

May 22, June 15	West Coast Kalispell Center	Kalispell, MT	4-8
June 17	Kalispell High School	Kalispell, MT	10-4

Lolo National Forest

May 10	University Center, University of Montana	Missoula, MT	6:30-9pm
May 11	Senior Citizens' Center	Seeley Lake, MT	6:30-8pm
May 16	Superior High School	Superior, MT	6:30-9pm
May 23	Fairgrounds Pavilion	Plains, MT	6:30-9pm

Please contact 406-329-3802 or visit www.fs.fed.us/r1/wmpz for more information. Written comments on the proposed plans should be submitted to:

Proposed Land Management Plan
Bitterroot National Forest
1801 N. First Street
Hamilton, MT 59840
wmpz@fs.fed.us

The proposed plan is being distributed in an electronic form. A CD is being mailed to everyone on the Western Montana Planning Zone Mailing List. Anyone wishing to be added to the mailing list should contact the Bitterroot, Flathead or Lolo National Forests. The entire plan and accompanying maps are available at www.fs.fed.us/r1/wmpz. The final plan is anticipated Fall, 2006.

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